

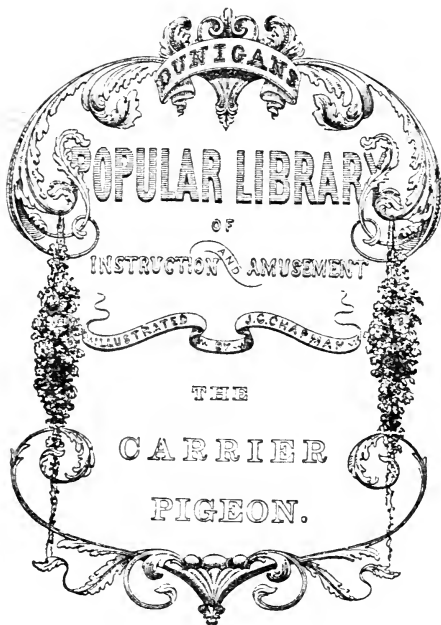


Louis Lauren,  
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"Late one evening, two pilgrims knocked at the castle gate"—Page 27

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ABOUT two centuries ago, there lived in the mountain hold

of Falkenberg, the brave knight Theobald and his pious wife Ottilia. The knight was as good as he was brave. He took under his powerful protection all who had any injury to complain of, and never asked even thanks for his aid. To make others happy, he thought, was an ample reward. In Ottilia the poor had a

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generous friend. She visited the sick in the neighboring valleys, and opened wide the gates of her castle to all who required and desired relief. Agnes, the only daughter of this virtuous pair, followed from her infancy the example of her parents. When only eight years old, her greatest pleasure was to make others happy. No wonder, then, that this good family was universally respected and beloved, and that no person ever caught a glimpse of the high towers of Falkenberg without a hearty blessing on the good people that dwelt within its walls. The blessing of heaven did visibly descend on Theobald, Ottilia, and Agnes. Their hands were ever open, yet they never knew want: they were as wealthy as any family in the land.

One fine summer's day, Ottilia and her daughter took a walk after dinner, in the

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garden, which sloped down the side of the mountain. The passage to the garden was by a long flight of stone steps, descending from a door in the castle wall. The garden was well stocked with every thing that could please the eye; here were clusters of budding roses, and flowers in all their varieties—long rows of pears with their silver blossoms, and blushing cherries peeping from beneath their dark green leaves. The mother and daughter stood, for awhile, near a fountain in the middle of the garden, amusing themselves with the play of the water, which shot up its crystal wreaths in the bright beams of the summer sun, and descended in a thousand diamond drops, glittering with all the colors of the rainbow. Then retiring to a bower, shaded with the trellised and clustering vine, they began to make clothes for a poor orphan

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girl. No sound was heard in the garden ; all was still and tranquil, save, now and then, the sweet song of the linnet on a bough of a neighboring tree, or the ceaseless and monotonous splash of the distant fountain.

As they were sitting together, something flew so rapidly into the bower, that they could not know what it was. Both looked around in alarm, and instantly a large hawk darting down, poised itself on its broad wings at the entrance of the bower. But it flew off when it saw persons within. Agnes sat there so terrified, that she dared not look around her, to know what it was that took refuge in the bower ; but the mother, with a smile, said to her, " Do not fear, it is only a poor bird that has fled in here from the hawk ; look," said she, pointing, " it is a snow-white little dove. In its fright, it took



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refuge there behind you." She then took the dove in her hand, and casting an inquiring glance at Agnes, said, "I will roast it for you this evening."

"Roast it?" exclaimed Agnes, seizing the dove with both her hands, as if her mother was going to kill it on the spot. "Oh! no, dear mother, you cannot be serious. The poor little thing flew to me for refuge—can I consent to kill it? Oh! how beautiful it is; white as the driven snow, and its little feet, red as glowing coral. Its poor heart beats; and its innocent eyes are fixed on me, as if they would say—do not hurt me—No! poor bird, I will not hurt thee. You sought, and you must have my help. I will take the best care of you."

"Right, my dear child," said the mother, affectionately. "You knew my wishes. I only wished to try you. Bring the bird

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to your chamber and feed it. We should never spurn the unhappy when they seek our aid. We must be kind to all that are in grief, and have pity on animals themselves."

By the mother's orders a little dove-cot, with red roof and green lattice-work, was prepared, and placed in a corner of Agnes' chamber, where she fed the dove every day with clean corn and fresh water, supplying it also with sand. It soon became accustomed to Agnes, and grew tame and domesticated. When she opened the door of the little cage, it would fly out and pick the corn from her hand. In a short time it became so perfectly content, that it showed not the slightest wish to recover its liberty.

At break of day, while Agnes was yet asleep, the dove would fly towards her bed, and give her no rest until she arose

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and gave it food. Agnes complained to her mother of this annoyance. "But I know," said she, "how to prevent the restless little thing from disturbing my sleep. I will fasten the cage door every night, and keep it locked up until I awake in the morning." "Oh, no," answered the mother, "rather let the dove teach you to rise early in the morning. Early rising is good for the health, and cheers and contents the mind. Surely, you ought to be ashamed if you arose later than a dove." Agnes obeyed her mother's advice, and always arose early in the morning.

One day Agnes was sitting near the window, sewing. The window was open, and the dove, which had been picking some crumbs at her feet, suddenly flew out, and lighted on the next house. Agnes was alarmed, and screamed aloud. Her mother ran to know what was the matter.

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“O, my dove!” said Agnes, pointing to the roof where it perched, and was basking in the sun. “Call it back,” said the mother. Agnes did so, and to her inexpressible delight the dove instantly obeyed the call, and perched on her outstretched hand. While Agnes was thus happy, her mother said, “Be you ever as obedient to me as the dove is to you, and you will make me always as happy as you are now. Will you not make me happy?” Agnes did promise, and kept her word. No daughter could be more obedient.

Another day, after Agnes had watered her flower-knots in the garden, she was tired, and sat on the green bank beside her mother over the fountain. The dove, which was now so tame that it had full liberty to fly where it pleased, came and perched on a stone to drink in the fountain. “See, mother,” said Agnes, “how

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carefully it flies from one moss-covered stone to another ; how cautiously it avoids the mud between the stones : how cleanly the little thing is. White is the color most easily soiled, and yet there is not a single speck on the snowy plumage of the careful bird.” “ But, see how careless Agnes is,” said the mother, pointing to Agnes’ white frock. When bringing the water-pot from the fountain, she had not taken good care of her clothes, so that some spots were found on them. She blushed when she saw them, but from that day ner mother had never to complain of the slightest soil in Agnes’ dress.

She once took a journey with her mother, in which she enjoyed the greatest amusement. In the evening, when she came home, the dove at once flew to meet her, and gave very clear signs of its great joy for her return. “ It was sorrowful all

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day for your absence," said one of the maids, "and sought you in every part of the house. It amazes me, how a little animal like it, that has no sense, can know its mistress and love it so much." "No doubt," said Agnes, "I am more than repaid by this gratitude for the few grains of corn I give it every day." "But are you, Agnes," said her mother, "always so grateful? Look back to all the joys you have had to-day. Have you thanked God for them? Oh! let not a poor bird put you to the blush." Before this time Agnes had not reflected much on her obligation of gratitude to God; but, henceforward, she never retired to rest without pouring forth her most ardent thanks to God for all the joys and favors he had bestowed on her that day.

"Dear little dove," said Agnes, one morning early, as she sat at her work,

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and looked at the bird perched on the edge of the table, with its bright, beaming eyes fixed on its mistress, "I have got many good lessons from you, and I owe you many thanks." "Oh, but the best is to come," said the mother. "The beautiful white dove is a lovely emblem of innocence. Candid, artless, and unaffected—it has no guile, no deceit, no dissimulation. Our divine Redeemer included all those qualities in the words, 'Be simple as doves.' Oh, ever aim at that noble simplicity; avoid guile, deceit, and all sorts of evil. God grant that it may one day be said with truth, 'Agnes is as innocent and candid as a dove.'"

The prayer was heard, for such was the character of Agnes with all who knew her.

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### CHAPTER II.

#### ROSALIND AND HER DAUGHTER EMMA.

THE Knight Theobald returned home one evening from an expedition against a powerful band of robbers, who had long infested the country, and kept the whole population in constant alarm. Delighted at the success of his expedition, and amidst his family, he told with great animation how he had captured many of the robbers and handed them over to the law, and dispersed the others so that they could no longer trouble the peace and happiness of the land. The narrative was long. Ottilia and Agnes, though they listened attentively, busily plied their spinning-wheels. It was very late, the chamber lights were already on the table, when suddenly a beautiful lady, pale and



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dressed in black, entered the parlor, with a little girl, also in black, leaning on her arm. The knight and his wife and daughter rose to salute the stranger.



“God bless you, noble knight,” said the lady, weeping; “though I have never even seen you before, I come to claim your protection. I am Rosalind of Hohenberg

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—this is my daughter Emma. My great afflictions are not, perhaps, unknown to you. My good husband died of the wounds received in that great battle fought last year. Oh, what a loss I have had in him! A virtuous man—a kind and affectionate husband—the best of fathers. You knew him well. Generous to all who asked his help, he left no provision for us here—his treasures are stored up in heaven. We are now in great danger of being deprived even of the necessaries of life. My two neighbors, both rapacious knights, are oppressing me. One wishes to seize my corn-fields and pasture-lands, up to the very walls of my castle; the other threatens to rob me of my forests, that come up to my gates at the other side. Oh, how much they are changed! Avarice, the cause of so many crimes on this earth, has changed my hus-

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band's friends into my bitterest enemies. Too well he foresaw this, and with his last breath he mentioned your name. 'Put your confidence,' said he, 'in God and Sir Theobald, and no enemy shall dare touch a hair of your head.' Oh, realize the words of my dying husband. Alas! what shall become of me, if I have nothing but my castle walls! Can the stones feed myself and my Emma? Should you—which heaven forbid—meet my husband's fate, and your lady and daughter be poor and helpless as we, may they find a strong arm to help them in the hour of need!"

Little Emma, who was about the same age as Agnes, approached the knight, and, with tears in her eyes, implored him—"Noble knight, be a father to me, and do not reject me."

Theobald stood with a serious air, his

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eyes on the ground, and one hand, according to his custom, raised to his lips. "Oh, dear father," said Agnes, crying, "do pity them. When the dove, chased by the hawk, sought help from me, my mother said that we should never reject those who fly to us for aid. She was delighted that I had pity on the dove. And do not this little lady and her mother deserve pity more than the dove? Oh, save them from the grasping claws of these knights—they are wicked hawks."

The knight was deeply affected, and answered with earnestness, "Yes, Agnes, with the help of God I will protect them. I was silent, not because I did not feel for their wrongs, but because I was thinking how I could avenge them, and protect this excellent lady and her innocent daughter." The knight brought a chair for the mother, and little Agnes did the same for

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the daughter. Ottilia went to prepare a supper better than usual for her guests; for in those days ladies even of high birth superintended such matters in person.

Theobald then asked the grounds of the exorbitant claims of the two knights, and was satisfied that Rosalind was deeply injured. "Justice is on your side," said he, "and to-morrow, at break of day, I with some of my retainers shall try what we can do for you. Remain here with your daughter until I return, and you can then bring home with you the good news I expect to have for you." The whole company then partook of some refreshment, and spent a happy night together. In the morning Theobald, accompanied by his retainers, set out for Rosalind's castle.

Agnes was delighted that Emma was to spend some days with her. She conducted her young guest to her chamber,

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and through the garden, and showed her all her wardrobe, her flowers, and her dove. In a short time they were warm friends; for Emma, too, was a good and well-educated girl.

In a few days Theobald returned. "Good news," said he, when he entered the hall. "Noble lady, your enemies have renounced their extravagant claims, and all strife is at an end. Though I proved clearly that their claims were unjust, they paid very little attention to me; but they took another tone when I told them, that the slightest injury done to you would be a declaration of war against me. Have courage and hope, lady! no stranger shall reap your fertile fields, nor fell the trees of your paternal forests."

The afflicted lady now forgot her griefs, and tears of gratitude glistened in her eyes. "God, the faithful protector of the

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widow and orphan," said she—"God will reward you for the favor you have done to me and my child; may He protect you from all evil, and guard you in the hour of need."

She then prepared to return without delay to Hohenberg. Agnes and her young friend were overwhelmed with grief for their separation. The stranger could not be allowed to go without a present; and as she had often expressed a wish to have a tame dove, Agnes brought down her own, and, with tears in her eyes, gave it to Emma. At first she positively refused to take it; but after a warm contest with her affectionate friend, she consented. Agnes gave her the cage also; and recommended the poor dove with as much earnestness, as a mother intrusting her child to a stranger's care.

But Emma was scarcely gone, when

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Agnes was sorry for having given the dove. "Mother," said she, "it would have been much better, had I given my gold ear-rings, as a keepsake, to my young friend." But her mother said, "You can do so, when she comes again. The present you gave was far more suitable on this occasion. Had it been richer, it would not have been so welcome, and might, perhaps, have given offence. To present her the thing most dear to you, however trifling in itself, was creditable to you, and gave her the strongest proof of your love. Do not regret what you have done. See, your good father was ready to risk his life to defend an injured lady, and should not you renounce your greatest pleasure, to cheer an afflicted orphan? Whoever does not learn to sacrifice every earthly good, no matter how dear, for the benefit of his afflicted



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fellow-creatures, can have no real love for them. Such sacrifices are the noblest that we can offer to God. He will reward you amply for your generous present."

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## CHAPTER III.

### THE TWO PILGRIMS.

LADY ROSALIND now lived content and in peace within the walls of her old castle, which lay in the deep recess of a wooded mountain. Late one evening, two pilgrims knocked at the castle gate, and asked for a night's lodging. They were dressed in the usual style of pilgrims—a long dark brown robe, scallop-shells in their hats, and the pilgrim's staff in their hands. The porter sending to his lady for orders, she at once told him to con-

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duct the strangers to the lower chambers, and supply them with a good supper and a goblet of wine. Rosalind and her daughter came down, when supper was over.

The pilgrims told them many tales of the Holy Land. All the inmates of the castle were grouped eagerly around them, but none was more deeply interested in the wonderful narratives, than little Emma. The tears flowed at each story, and before they were over, she would give the world to visit, even once, that Holy Land, where our Saviour lived and died. It was a pious wish, but her joy was dashed as she feared she could never gratify it.

“Dear Emma,” said her mother, “any hour you please, you can visit that Holy Land, and see the Mount of Olives and Calvary, and the Tomb of our Lord. You have only to read the history of Jesus Christ, and you can follow Him

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through His charitable journeyings, and catch up His words as they fall from His lips, and witness His Passion, Death, and Resurrection. If we profit by His lessons, His example, His sufferings, His death, and His resurrection, we have the Holy Land within our hearts. Yes—did all men study His history, and strictly obey His law, this wide world would become one Holy Land.”

The pilgrims then made particular inquiries about the neighboring country, and especially about the castle of Falkenberg. They extolled Knight Theobald to the skies. “If his castle be not too much out of our way,” said the elder pilgrim, “and if I thought I could find him at home, I could not think of passing without paying him a visit.” Rosalind told him that Falkenberg castle lay directly in their road, and that Theobald, who had

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just returned from an excursion, would certainly be at home. "I am most happy to hear it," said the pilgrim. "It is my dearest wish to see him under his own roof. To-morrow, at daybreak, we start for Falkenberg."

Rosalind and her daughter sent a thousand kind remembrances to Theobald, Ottilia, and Agnes. Emma gave some money to the pilgrims, which her mother had given her for the purpose, and told them not to forget, on any account, to tell her friend Agnes, that the dove was going on well. As the good lady had learned from the inquiries of the strangers, that they were unacquainted with the country, she ordered one of the servant-boys to be ready in the morning early, to conduct them; and then taking her leave, she wished the pilgrims a good-night.

Next morning the pilgrims set out.

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Their young guide was proud of his errand, and insisted on being allowed to carry their wallets. They took no notice of him, but walked on silently. For a while their road was very uneven, up hill and down hill, but at length, having reached the top of a very steep hill, they came on a level road, and began to converse in Italian. Their guide was also an Italian. Leonard was the name usually given him in the castle, but he was much better pleased to be called Leonardo, as in his native land. He was a poor orphan boy, whom Sir Adelind had taken up, and brought with him to Germany. Though long accustomed to speak the German language, he had not yet forgotten the Italian. He listened with delight to the pilgrims, and was just going to say how happy he was to hear once more the sweet sounds of his native tongue,—when he

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suddenly shrunk back, chilled and horrified at what they were saying.

He collected from what he heard, that they were pilgrims in dress only; that this neighborhood was not so unknown to them as they pretended; that they belonged to that band of robbers which Theobald had punished so severely, and that they were now burning for revenge; that under the cloak of piety, they had resolved to go to his castle and get a night's lodging; but that at the dead of night, when all was still, they were to rise and massacre Theobald and all his family, then plunder his castle and reduce it to ashes.

As soon as the towers of Falkenberg appeared in the gray distance, between two wooded mountains, Lupo, the old bandit, said to his younger companion, Orso, "See the dragon-nest of that horrible butcher, who brought so many of

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our brave boys to the gallows. A death of the most racking torture awaits him. We'll chain him, and burn him alive in the flames of his castle."

"Yes," answered Orso; "still the mission endangers our necks. If it fail, we are dead. But a chance of getting the knight's bags of gold is worth the risk."

"His life," said the old robber, with a revengeful scowl. "His murder would give more joy than his bags of gold, though I have an eye to them, too. Once safe out of this venture, and our fortunes are made. We can retire from trade, and live on our money. An idea strikes me just now. What a pleasant thing to dress ourselves in the knight's most splendid robes! You can have his gold collar, and I his knight's cross of precious stones. We can then fly to some foreign land, where no one can recognise us, and there

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pass for gentlemen, and make the most of our money."

"All very good," said Orso, "but still I have my doubts about the result."

"What doubts?" asked Lupo. "Are not all our plans well-laid and promising? Have we not associates enough at our call? The moment we hang out at the window of our room the three lights which we have taken as the signal, have we not seven stout and daring comrades, who have been on the watch for us these many nights past? We can admit them through the little garden gate, which is easily opened from the inside. One of those men, who was once a resident in the castle, knows every nook and chamber and turn in it, as well as in his own house. Nine of us, well armed, will have to do with a few men in their beds. Courage alone is required—success is certain."



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The blood froze in poor Leonardo's veins at this atrocious project, but he did not let them see that he knew what they were saying. He walked carelessly behind them, now and then plucking some flowers, or playing a little tune on a leaf; but all the time he was praying fervently to God, that he might defeat the diabolical scheme of these horrible men. Leonardo resolved to accompany them to the castle, and make their plans known to the brave Theobald.

While they were still arranging the best means of succeeding, the old robber slipped on a narrow footpath, and had nearly fallen into a deep chasm in the rock. In the fall he was caught by some brambles, and the thorns raising his pilgrim cloak, Leonardo saw under that long dark-brown dress, a scarlet doublet and a glittering breastplate of polished steel. A long,

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sharp dagger, was also visible. But the boy seemed as if he had not seen them. The old villain suddenly concealed the dagger and pulled down his pilgrim cloak, casting at the same time a hawk's glance at the poor trembling boy.

They now came to the brink of a frightful ravine, through which a mountain torrent, swollen with the heavy rains, roared and tumbled beneath them. Two projecting rocks met halfway over the gulf, and between them lay a long slender plank of fir, secured only at one side. This was their only path. As they approached it, the old robber said in Italian, "That lad may have seen that I am armed, and may suspect us. When he is getting over, I must send him to the bottom. Then we are safe—he can tell no tales."

At these terrible words a deadly chill shot through poor Leonardo's frame. He

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drew back several paces from the frightful abyss. "I am afraid," said he; "my head is dizzy." "Don't be afraid, boy, come here to me and I will help you over," said the old villain, rushing, with outstretched arms, to seize him. But Leonardo screamed and fled, and had made up his mind to plunge into a thicket if the robber came near him. "Ah," said the poor fellow, trembling in every limb, "let me go; both of us would fall into the flood. And though I got over safe, how could I come back? Let me go home; you don't want a guide now. When you are over the bridge, Falkenberg is near you; you want no guide."

The young robber, who did not much like to cross the dangerous plank, at once ascribed the poor boy's terror to the same cause. "If the simple body," said he in Italian, "suspected any thing, I will con-



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sent to be flung down this gulf; and, suppose that he had seen your armor and dagger, what then? he does not understand our language, and, of course, does not know what we were plotting. Besides, no one would pay any attention to his childish prattling. Let the poor scamp take to his heels."

"Well, be it so," said the old robber; "but for greater security we must cut this plank, and then, though the fellow should know, he cannot baffle our plans. There is Falkenberg. There is no bridge or ford over this stream for several leagues at either side of us. News cannot come here until our work is done."

The two bandits then took their wallets from the boy, and allowed him to go away, without one kind word for having conducted them. They passed the bridge, and when they were at the other side, old

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Lupo shouted aloud, "You were right, lad ; that was a dangerous passage. It is crazy from age, and almost rotten. Lives would certainly be lost on it ; so it is much better to break it down, and then people must build a more secure one."

The two bandits then pulled down the old planks. They tumbled with a loud splash into the foaming flood, and were whirled rapidly over the rugged precipice. As soon as the pretended pilgrims disappeared behind the rocks on the opposite side, Leonardo ran with all his might to bring the terrible news to his lady. Not one soul in the whole neighborhood he knew to whom he could safely intrust his secret, with any hope of putting the doomed victims on their guard.

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### CHAPTER IV.

#### FEARS AND HOPES.

Nothing could be farther from Lady Rosalind's thoughts within the secure walls of her castle, than the awful fate that was descending on the noble Theobald. Since the departure of the pilgrims, Emma's mind was entirely captivated by their narratives, and she asked her mother a thousand questions about the Holy Land. The day was given to their usual occupations ; but at the approach of evening, when the sun was descending, and a refreshing breeze cooled the air, they descended from their mountain castle, to view their lands in the adjacent valley. Every thing promised an abundant harvest. Some fields waving with golden corn, gave rich hopes of an overflowing granary ; while others,

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gleaming with the brilliant hues of the blue flax-blossom, rivalled the summer sky in beauty. The mother and daughter felt doubly happy, because they looked upon these fields as a recent present from heaven, and fervently thanked their God for his bounteous favors.

Leonardo, reeking with perspiration, and almost out of breath, rushed down to his mistress. "O lady," said he, clapping his hands, "horrible news! They are not pilgrims, but robbers and murderers, these men that I went with; they are murdering Theobald and all his family, and plundering and burning his castle." The frightened boy could say no more; he sunk down exhausted under a tree by the roadside, and remained for some time insensible, and unable to utter a single word.

Rosalind and Emma were overwhelmed with grief. "Gracious heaven," exclaim-



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ed the mother, "what shocking intelligence! Oh, noble knight, generous lady!"

"And my own kind Agnes," said Emma, trembling and pale as death. "Can I live if she and her good parents are murdered?" ●

"Run, Emma," said the mother, "run to the castle. I and this poor boy will follow as soon as we can. Run with all your might, and give the alarm to our retainers. They must start instantly for Falkenberg, to defend them. Let them drive, though they were to sink their horses to the earth."

Emma sprung swift as a roe up the steep side of the mountain, and rushing into the castle gate, alarmed all the domestics by her cries. They rushed into the court, and she told them that fire and sword were descending on devoted Falkenberg. The news fell like a thunderbolt

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on the whole family ; they cursed the pretended pilgrims, and could not feel more excited were their own castle in flames over their heads.

Rosalind arrived shortly after, accompanied by Leonardo, of whom she had in the mean time learned all the particulars. "Why are you standing here in idle sorrow," said she ; "start—run—save them."

"Impossible, my lady," said an old gray-haired groom. "The two villains have too great a start of us ; they are in Falkenberg already. It is almost evening now, and Falkenberg is not less than fifteen leagues distant. How could we travel so rapidly in a dark night, over a bad road, torn up now by the winter floods ? The best horse in the stable could not bring me to Falkenberg before daybreak ; besides, our farm-horses are bad roadsters, and all the war-horses were sold after my

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master's death. There is not in the whole country, far or near, a single horse that could well stand half the journey."

The good lady wrung her hands in an agony of grief. "Oh, God," she exclaimed, raising her hands and eyes to heaven, while her tears flowed copiously, "there is no help but in thee. O, have pity on the good people who had pity on me! Pray, Emma, pray that God may blast the project of the villains."

Emma wept, and clasping her hands, prayed fervently—"Gracious God, assist them as they assisted us." Her prayer was echoed by all the attendants, who sympathized sincerely in the sorrow of their lady.

"My good men," said Rosalind once more, "it may be almost impossible to reach Falkenberg before midnight, but at least make the attempt. A few words

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would save their lives. A moment may decide all. If poor Leonardo were not exhausted, and almost killed, he could run as swift as when he won the race some-time ago. Martin," she said, turning to a little boy, "you run swiftly; start at once. The footpath is one-third shorter than the road. Arrive in time at Falkenberg, and a hundred florins are yours."

"Impossible, my lady," said the boy. "Who could travel these dark nights over a rough mountain path, without falling over some precipice?"

"Besides," added Leonardo, "there is no crossing the river; a man could not do it without wings."

"Wings," said Emma, while her eyes danced with joy. "A plan strikes me for sending word to Falkenberg. Knight Theobald told me, that if I did not keep my dove closely locked, it would certainly

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go home. The distance is great, but it will find its way. Let us fasten a note on the dove's neck, and it will soon be in Falkenberg."

"Oh, thanks be to God," exclaimed the mother. "I think he has heard our prayer. It was your good angel, Emma, that put that thought in your head."

Emma ran and brought down the dove, while her mother was writing the note. They tied it firmly to the red collar that Emma had placed on the dove's neck. She then, accompanied by her mother and all the domestics, brought out the dove, and let it off outside the castle walls. The dove shot up straight into the blue sky, and after sailing two or three times over the castle, turned towards Falkenberg, and was soon out of sight. There was not a soul in the castle of Hohenberg that did not praise the happy thought of

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their young lady. Hearty prayers followed the poor dove. A vessel laden with gold could not have more sincere and anxious benedictions.

Rosalind and her daughter were now a prey to harrowing suspense. "Will the dove find the way, and be there in time?" asked the mother. "Oh, if the hawk should pounce on it, or if it fail on the way, or arrive too late, or not be seen and admitted should it reach Falkenberg, how dreadful are the consequences?" The mother and daughter sat down near the window that looked towards Falkenberg, and as they gazed with anxious eyes on the surrounding prospect, their hearts were raised to heaven in silent prayer. The mists of evening began to fall, and filled them with the most gloomy forebodings. They shuddered at the thought, that a lurid glare in the distance, reflecting the

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flames of Falkenberg, might too soon tell them that the dove had not arrived. They never stirred from the window, nor closed their eyes during the whole night.

Midnight soon came. A frightful storm howled through the forest, and the sky towards Falkenberg became dark as pitch. Suddenly, to their great horror, it grew bright. They trembled, and prayed. "Merciful heaven!" exclaimed Emma, "the flames are ascending higher and higher every moment; oh, look, how the storm agitates them!" They would have fainted, had they not soon discovered their mistake; for, to their great joy, they saw that it was the full moon, shooting her beams through the murky heavens, and at last rising like a large shield over the summit of the mountain. Still they remained at the window; but they saw no traces of that fiery red that is usually reflected in a dark

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sky from a building in flames. At length daylight returned; and with joyful and hearty thanks to God, they welcomed the beams of morning, which closed so harassing and anxious a night.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE RESCUE.

ROSALIND and Emma were now satisfied that the murderers had not succeeded in burning Falkenberg. Still they were uncertain whether Theobald and his wife and daughter might not have been murdered. Many a time did Rosalind exclaim, "Oh! what would I not give for good news from Falkenberg: I would give up all I have in this world." "And I would give all my money, too," said Emma. But



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the fate of Falkenberg was as yet a mystery to them, and their only resource was to wait patiently for news.

The evening before, Theobald, Ottilia, and Agnes were, after sitting down to table, happy and unsuspecting, as they always were. The rays of the descending sun shone through the round windows, and lighted up with their ruddy hues the old baronial hall. The warder announced two pilgrims. "Take good care of them," said Theobald, "and after dinner I will see them myself. Let them come up and give us an account of their pilgrimage. In the mean time, let them have dinner and a goblet of good wine to make them eloquent." The warder retired, and Agnes was indulging in the joyous anticipation of an interesting narrative. Alas! little did they dream of the frightful fate that hung over them!

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As they were sitting happy and contented there, Agnes suddenly exclaimed in wonder, "Oh! my little dove." And indeed there it was at the window, with its little wings outspread, and pecking at the glass, as if to ask leave to get in. Agnes opened the window; the dove flew in, and perched on her shoulder. "Look," said the mother, "what a beautiful red collar it has got; and there is some paper tied to it—a letter, I believe. What singular tricks come into children's heads!"

Theobald examined the paper closely, and saw written on it the words, "Read quickly." "A pressing message this," said he with a smile. He opened the paper—read it. "Good heaven," said he, turning pale, "what is this?" "What?" asked the mother and daughter, in the greatest alarm. Theobald then read aloud:—

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“Most noble Knight—The two pilgrims who are with you this night, are two robbers of that gang against which you were lately engaged. The elder is called Lupo, the younger Orso. They have armor and sharp daggers under their pilgrim’s dress. This night they intend to murder you and your wife and daughter; to pillage your castle, and then give it up to the flames. They intend then to put on your dress, your knight’s uniform, the golden chain and the diamond cross, and thus to deceive others. Seven other villains are lurking in the neighborhood for the concerted signal—three lights from the strangers’ room—upon which they are to enter the castle, and aid their associates. The two robbers are to open the garden gate, and admit them. Heaven grant that the dove may arrive safe, and that you all may be saved! I had no other means of sending

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word to you. Do not forget to send instant news of your preservation to your grateful

“ROSALIND.”

“Merciful Providence !” said the mother, with great emotion, “how wonderful are thy ways ! The dove is a messenger from heaven to us, as it was once to Noah. Oh Agnes, let us bend the knee with the same feelings as they did in the ark : our preservation is not a whit less miraculous.”

Theobald, too, knelt ; and clasping his hands and raising his eyes to heaven, devoutly thanked God for this great goodness. Then ordering his wife and daughter to retire to another chamber, he buckled on his armor, and girding on his sword, ordered two of his bravest soldiers to be ready at a word.

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Word was then sent to the pilgrims to come up. They entered the chamber with a gentle air and a thousand salutations; and Lupo, with an humble look and in a low and respectful tone, thus spoke to Theobald: "Most noble Lord and Knight, we come direct from Hohenberg, and bring you a thousand kind remembrances. O how happy we feel to see, face to face, that noble knight whose heroism is known all over the world—who has the constant prayer of the widow and the orphan, and the oppressed, and whom the good Lady Rosalind praises and blesses as her most generous benefactor! Oh, what a noble lady she is! She treated us in the most princely manner. And her amiable daughter Emma—the little angel—was melted even to tears with the pious stories of our pilgrimage. But we have time enough to tell you and your noble family all the

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news from Hohenberg. For the present, we discharge our commission by assuring you that the mother and daughter, and that beautiful little dove too, are as well as you could wish them."

Theobald at all times hated flattery; but it roused him now to such a degree that he could scarcely restrain himself. Still he suppressed his anger, and in a solemn but calm tone asked, "Who are you?" "Poor pilgrims," they answered; "we are returning from the Holy Land to Thuringia, where we were born." "Your names?" said Theobald. "Herman is my name, and my companion's is Burkhart." "What do you want in my castle?" continued Theobald. "This night's lodging"—they replied; "we start in the morning at cock-crow. O how happy our poor friends will be to see us!"

"Wretch!" exclaimed the knight, in a

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thundering voice. "You are not Herman and Burkhart," said he, drawing his sword; "but you are Lupo, and that young villain is Orso. You are not returning from the Holy Land, you are robbers and cut-throats—not pilgrims. Germany is not your native place, you are not going to Thuringia. You come here to rob, and burn, and murder, and not for a night's lodging. But I pay you in your own coin—fire and sword shall be your punishment—aye—do you think your pilgrim dress, your crosses, and your shells deceive me? Here, servants, strip them at once, and let us see them in their own dress. Disarm them, chain them, and throw them into the dungeon."

The servants seized them and pulled off the pilgrim's dress, and there they stood armed to the teeth in coats of mail. "Horrible hypocrisy!" exclaimed the knight,

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“to disguise the black murderer’s heart under the dress of piety, that crime alone well deserves death.” The two robbers were then pinioned and cast into the dungeon.

When they found themselves alone, “How could that knight,” asked the younger, “know every thing so well? He knows even what we were saying on the road, about taking his clothes, and passing ourselves as knights. Can it be that the boy understood us, and betrayed the plot?”

“If so,” answered the old fellow, “he must have flown in through the castle window. I never took my eyes off the castle gate, and not one soul entered after ourselves. There is something wrong here—the knight must have a league with the devil.”

The old villain then became so inflamed



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with rage that he poured out awful imprecations on the knight. "That cruel Theobald," said he, gnashing his teeth, "is the ruin of us all." The obdurate wretch did not seem to know that his own evil deeds were the cause of his ruin.

But Orso soon began to murmur and weep and upbraid Lupo. "O! that I had not followed your bad example!" said he; "you promised me a long and happy life, and what awaits me now but a death of tortures? You told me that our life was not wicked, and that God pardons crime in this, and sometimes even in the next life. But the sense of my own conscience told me a very different tale and always threatened me with impending judgments. O! that I had not listened to that voice! What good can all my ill-gotten treasures do for me now? Had I supported myself by the hardest labor in the forest or the

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road, and kept my conscience clear, how happy would I not be in comparison with my present state ! But the hand of the most high and all-seeing Judge has seized me and plunged me into this dark dungeon. All is over with me here below. O ! that I could find mercy hereafter ! that I may serve as a warning example to young persons, and prevent them from being led into sin and crime, through a desire of wealth and pleasure, to be in the end miserable as I am now !”

In the mean time the servants were engaged, by order of their master, in another important affair. When night fell and the stars were glimmering in the sky, they hung out three lights from the room in which the pilgrims generally resided. The warder and seven others of tried fidelity were posted in the court-yard, near the little gate through which the rob-

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bers were expected to come. They waited for a long time—but no one appeared. The castle clock had tolled midnight—the moon arose and gilded with her golden beams the frowning battlements of the castle: the servants began to become restless. “Is all our trouble lost?” said they to themselves, “the villains, the moment they see us, will fly and escape through the woods.”

“Oh! I know a plan for enticing them in here securely,” said the warder, starting off at the same moment, and returning in a short time dressed out in the pilgrim’s cloak and cap. “They cannot know me now,” said he, “and you can remain behind that buttress until they come in.” The servants once more patiently resumed their position.

A gentle tap was heard at the gate. The warder opened it cautiously; one of

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the robbers was standing there, and mistaking the warder for the pretended pilgrim, asked in a whisper, "Is all right?"

"All right," answered the warder in the same low tone; "make no noise—come in gently."

One after another the seven robbers slipped in to the court-yard. They carried with them pitch<sup>d</sup> torches and other combustibles, and every man had his sword drawn. When the last man entered, the warden locked the door and took out the key, and instantly gave the signal to the servants.

They sprung upon the robbers, and each secured his man. At the same moment the castle gate was thrown open and the knight appeared, accompanied by a troop of his domestics, bearing blazing torches and glittering swords. The light from the moon and torches, made the place as

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bright as daylight. The robbers were struck powerless by the fear. They had not time to use their arms. They were easily overpowered, and bound with fetters, and flung into the dungeon to receive the reward of their villany.

“Such is the fate of the evil-doer,” said the knight; “he that digs a pit for his neighbor, falls into it himself.”

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE OLIVE-BRANCH.

LONG and wearily did those hours pass in Hohenberg, where Rosalind and her daughter were anxiously expecting news from Falkenberg. Many a time did poor Emma run up the winding flight of stone-steps, to the top of the tower, and strain

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her eyes to catch a glimpse of the expected messenger. Dinner hour came, and yet no news—and so violent was the depression of the mother and daughter, that they thought the hours would never pass away. At length, about nightfall, as Emma was looking out through the narrow windows in the tower, she saw, coming up the narrow road that led to the castle, a carriage—attended by a body of armed troopers. She flew at once to her mother, “They are coming!—they are safe!” said she; and both ran to meet their welcome visitors.

Sir Theobald, his wife and daughter, had started at break of day, to bring the good news in person, and to thank their preservers. Theobald sprung from his horse when he saw Rosalind and Emma, and his wife and daughter following him from the carriage, all expressed their

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warmest thanks for the happy escape from destruction. Words cannot give an idea of this meeting, nor of the joy, the gratitude, the emotions, that beamed in the faces of the two happy families as they entered the castle.

The evening was celebrated with all the pomp of a festival. The plot, and its discovery and defeat, were the sole topic of conversation. Leonardo was brought up, and obliged to tell every word he had heard the robbers say on the road. He did so—and when he came to that place where the young robber pleaded so hard that he should not be flung into the precipice, “I wish,” said he, “to appeal to your mercy in behalf of that man—let his punishment be merciful, since he was merciful himself.” All applauded this good thought of the boy.

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When dinner was over, Sir Theobald seized his silver goblet, "Here," said he, "is to the good Emma! it is her happy thought of THE CARRIER-PIGEON that we ought to thank for our own lives, and the preservation of old Falkenberg."

"Praise be to God," said Rosalind, "that we have much reason to be pleased with our children. But they must not be too proud of their good deed. For, that poor boy, Leonardo, who almost killed himself with running, deserves more thanks than they."

"You are certainly right," said Theobald, filling his goblet, which he tasted and then presented to the boy. "Drink to our health!" said he; "you shall be my page; for your fidelity ennobles you and gives you a title to honor."

"Deeply," said Ottilia, "ought we to



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cherish the memory of the good Adalrich, for, if he had not taken that orphan boy into his protection—where would we and ours be now?”

“Certainly,” said Rosalind, “the favor which my husband did to that boy, has been paid back to us one hundredfold, in your preservation. But has not Theobald been more generous to me and my orphan daughter? The prompt relief he gave us against our enemies, could not go unrewarded. He preserved us, and God preserved him. God could not forget Otilia’s and Agnes’ affectionate solicitude for me and my daughter. To Him alone be praise and glory!”

“Yes,” concluded the knight, “to God, here, as always, the first acknowledgment is due. He has mercifully looked down on us; and by the agency of an innocent

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little pigeon, has wrought great wonders in our favor—eternal praises to His name! But we must not be ungrateful, nevertheless, to our generous friends. What my sword could not have effected—to secure my castle against fraud and treachery—that Emma has achieved by the aid of her little pigeon. Women, nay, even children, may effect great good, provided, like Rosalind and Emma, they be but of right heart and place their whole trust in God. And as Emma is now mistress of this castle, and has thus, in her very childhood, without a sword being drawn, secured to the empire an important frontier fortress, I shall request the emperor to grant her, as her armorial bearings, ‘a white pigeon with a green olive-branch.’”

“It is an admirable idea,” said the lady

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Ottilia, “and we must see that it shall be carried out. Meanwhile, I also must not forget my dear Emma.” She made a sign to her daughter, who left the apartment, and after a little the pigeon flew in. Agnes had brought it in a little basket, but had not yet said a word about it to her little friend. The bird at once flew to Emma and perched upon her hand. To her great amazement, it carried a gold olive-branch in its beak.

“My dear Emma,” said Ottilia, “this gold olive-branch—the emblem of deliverance from peril, must be to you a little token of our gratitude. It was my mother’s bridal gift to me, for it was in time of war and distress, and I have worn it as a hair-bodkin, for which it was intended. My mother, when she handed it to me, repeated a simple old rhyme, which is ap-

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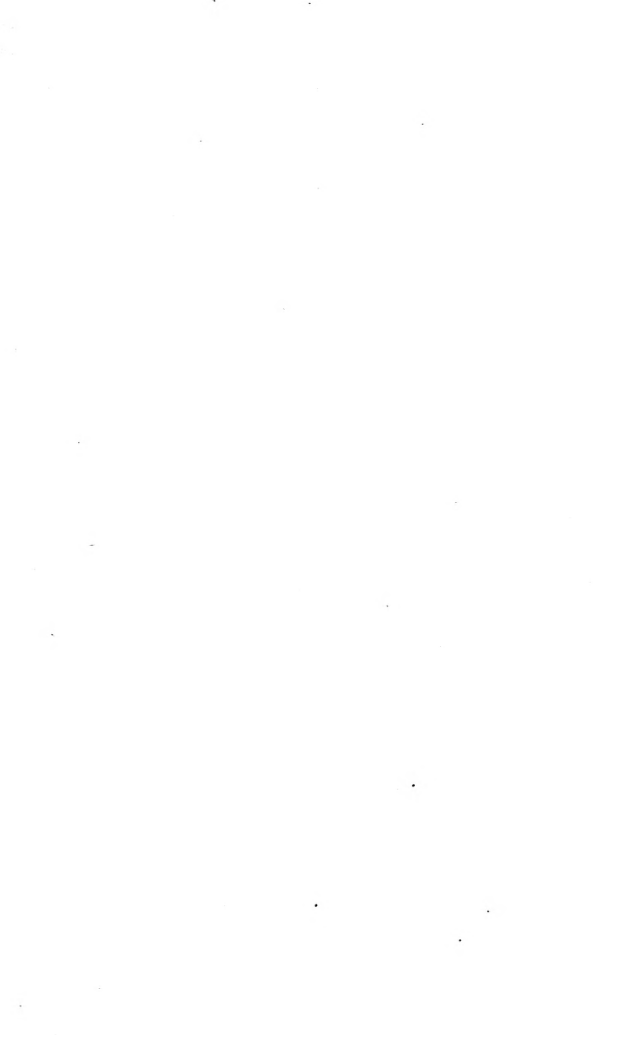
propriate to this occasion also, and has been fulfilled in your history.

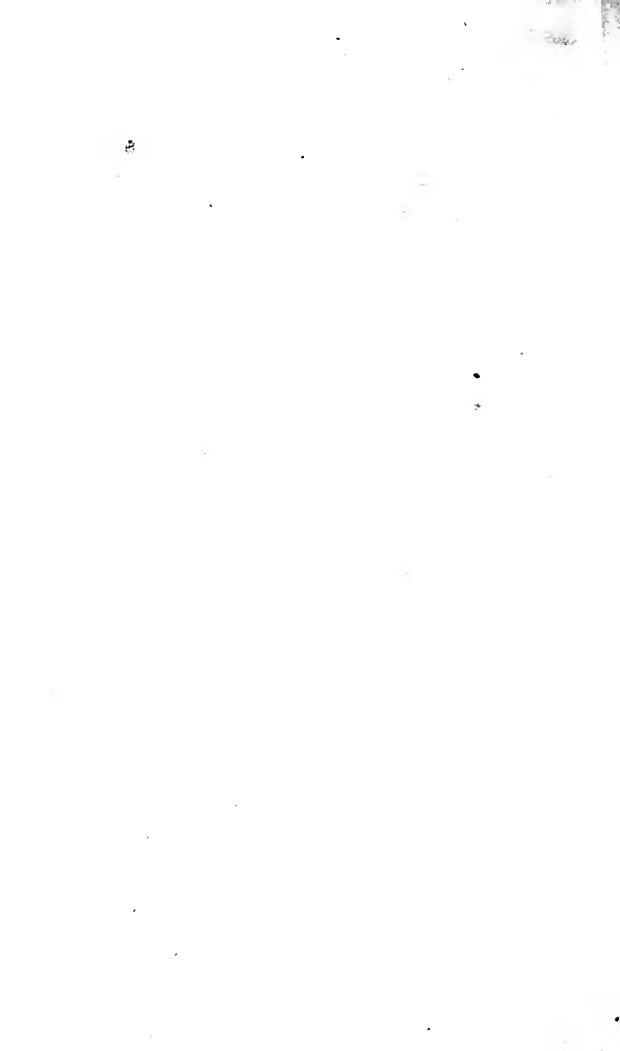
‘In every peril, let this olive be  
Emblem of God’s protecting power to thee:  
Even as to Noah, in the days of yore,  
So let it be, till life shall be no more.’ ”













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